1: Gorer J-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

tea-plantations. In this district too there has been very considerable infiltration of Nepalis, coming from their crowded and relatively infertile country; more industrious and better cultivators than the Lepchas, the Nepali are continuously displacing them everywhere.

The Lepchas also appear to be a dying race; there is a difference of about 5,000 between the 1901 and the 1931 census; but the figures for Sikkim are perhaps not altogether reliable. As a society, with its unique conglomeration of attitudes, the Lepchas are certainly disappearing, for their culture presupposes a homogeneous interlocking community, and this, as well as their almost complete suppression of competition and aggression, causes an inevitable breakdown of their culture in any mixed community. This book would have been impossible if the Maharajah of Sikkim had not made the part of his estate called Zongu into a Lepcha reserve, where he has made a law that only pure-blooded Lepchas may become landowners. It is only in Zongu and in one or two small villages outside the reserve that there is a homogeneous Lepcha society, practically undisturbed by alien influence. These survivals can be considered artificial, as without the indirect pacification of the British government and the benevolence of the Maharajah, these Lepchas would, like their fellows, have been ousted from the little and poor land which remains to them. But beyond the reservation of this piece of land for their exclusive use the society has not been interfered with, nor preserved as a museum piece; it is still, as will be seen later, in a state of constant modification; indeed the economic changes of the last thirty years are likely to be particularly far-reaching.

Of the Lepchas outside Zongu I can say very little, for I only had slight opportunities of observing them. In Sikkim they appear to subsist fairly well in the mixed communities, to a very great extent adopting the habits, culture, and even the language of their neighbours; they share with them the religion of lamaism, which is the official religion of the State. In India they constitute only a tiny minority of the population of the district; they appear to have lost almost all corporate unity; they have practically completely forgotten their own language, and it would appear that none of the children round Kalimpong at any rate can speak anything except Nepali. Lost in the overwhelming mass of alien people, the Lepchas have no social organisation; and since Lepcha life is based on the social group they have been left with little except their appearance and their gentleness which can be called specifically Lepcha. All

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the Lepchas' ethics and attitudes which go to make a culture are founded on a community of equal citizens; divorced from such a community the Lepcha culture is meaningless. To some extent the Lepchas have adapted themselves to the changed conditions, accepting the way of life and language of their neighbours. But compared with the Nepali and Plains Indians they are wasteful agriculturists and they have a relatively high standard of living; despite some legal protection—the Lepcha cannot be dispossessed of his last five acres of land—it seems as though they must disappear fairly rapidly, either through want or through absorption. In India a certain amount of intermarriage goes on between Lepchas and Nepali; the Lepcha woman is esteemed for her physical appearance and her mild and yielding character.

In the last census nearly all Lepchas are entered as Buddhists; a little over a thousand had been converted to Christianity. Despite the small numbers the Lepchas represent one of the most fruitful fields of missionary endeavour in Northern India; and the conversion of individuals to Christianity seems to have modified the converts' character far more profoundly than the earlier group conversion to Buddhism. The Christians with whom I came in contact exhibited a strong sense of individual sin (an attitude lamaism has been unable to implant) and excessive prudery, with which was coupled a tendency to snigger at excretory functions.

ii

In an endeavour to gain converts the Baptist mission went to the length of translating and printing in the artificial Lepcha script three books of the New Testament. This seems to have been a work of almost complete supererogation, for the Lepcha script, never widely known, has now completely fallen into disuse; in order to read the scriptures Lepchas have to learn a new, and otherwise completely useless, alphabet; most of them are far more familiar with Nepali.

The Lepcha alphabet was invented at the end of the seventeenth or the beginning of the eighteenth century by King Cha-dor of Sikkim. According to Albert Grünwedel the Lepcha alphabet is derived from a form of the Tibetan U-med alphabet.[3] Some sort

[3] This resemblance is not very obvious to the lay eye; out of the 56 Lepcha characters 18 have no parallel in the U-med alphabet, and, of the 38 signs common to both, over half have very different forms.

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Quite A Number

291 of men still wear the Lepcha dress, though the original Lepcha head-
[177] dress—a small sugar-loaf of woven bamboo surmounted by a feather—has been almost completely abandoned in favour of the biretta-like Tibetan hat decorated with coral beads. Hats are only worn on fairly ceremonious occasions. Lamas, and a few of the richer and older laymen, wear the outer dress of the Tibetan lama —a thick red, purple or dark-blue sleeved garment, joined from the waist to below the knees, and buttoning from the waist to the throat.

[286] Until the beginning of this century Lepchas used to weave all their own cloth, but nowadays only a couple of women bother to weave; people wear instead ready-made and fairly shoddy clothes. These bought clothes have had one rather serious effect, to my mind; children are usually dressed in the adapted cast-offs of their elders, and the poor and thin material in the cold winter
[164] renders young children even more susceptible to colds and bronchial trouble and has probably increased the infantile mortality. Very few people over the age of ten were troubled by colds and coughs—it would seem as though they acquired, if they survived, some sort of immunity—but there was hardly one child who was not, and the most frequent request which was made to me was for medicine to relieve these complaints. Three young children in Lingthem or
[75] the neighbourhood died of bronchial trouble during my stay there. Adults take reasonable precautions against chills, changing their clothes and taking a hot drink as soon as possible after a wetting; children who are not with older people often neglect to do so.

361 There would appear to be a considerable difference in humidity
● 184 and temperature between the portion of Zongu which faces the Teesta and that which faces the Talung river; the former is considerably warmer, as the cultivation of sugar-cane, manioc, and other subtropical plants shows, and it would appear that the rainfall is less. The inhabitants of the Teesta side are geographically nearer the main mule-road between Tibet and India; but it does not appear and is not believed that this propinquity with the outside world has modified the character or habits of these people in any way; they are considered to be essentially similar to the people of the Talung valley and there is constant intermarriage all through the district.

On the far side of the Talung valley the ground is excessively rough and precipitous and is to a great extent not amenable to cultivation. Although geographically outside Zongu the few settlements are administratively part of it, being attached to the bigger

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villages on the Zongu bank. Excluding the Talung monastery, which is a couple of days' journey from most of the villages, and which, save for a guardian, is empty except during certain festivals, there are no lamaist monasteries and very few lamas on this bank. The inhabitants of this portion are considered by the people of Zongu to be uncivilised and rude, keeping much more to the habits of their forefathers. For a great deal of their food they rely on hunting and forest produce; their religion is still almost entirely that of the Mun, the lamaist propaganda having reached them very slightly. Owing to the excessively precipitous nature of the ground I never went over to this side of the river; on a few occasions however I saw some of the inhabitants.

There are in Zongu itself twenty-two settlements with distinctive names, and across the river eight more; some of these named settlements only consist of two or three houses and they are administratively and emotionally divided into twelve districts. Although it is convenient to speak of villages these settlements have no sort of geographical unity; the houses are either isolated in the fields and forests, or gathered in small groups of three or four; I never saw more than four houses which were close neighbours. Except for the three villages—Lingthem, Gyatong and Tangvoong—which possess a monastery, there is no sort of focal centre to the village, and it would be possible for a casual traveller to pass through quite a large village without being aware of its existence. Lingthem, where I lived, consisted of 33 houses; it is the biggest village on the Talung side of Zongu, and the second biggest in the reserve; the biggest of all is Gyatong, which, with its neighbour Hi, contains 60 houses. From the spur of one hill in Lingthem it is possible to see eight houses at once; I should reckon that there were quite three miles and three thousand feet between the lowest house to the east and the highest house to the west in the village.

When three or four houses are grouped together they are usually given a distinctive name. This grouping does not necessarily correspond to any emotional or kinship ties among near neighbours; people living in adjoining houses may be closely related, or they may be complete strangers, and full brothers may live separated by the full distance of the village.[2] The metaphysical desiderata, described later in this chapter, for the choice of a house site and

[2] For the plan of the houses of Lingthem and their inhabitants, see Appendix I, b.

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there is not considered to be any sort of difference in customs or character between the various villages of Zongu, with a single exception. This exception is the village of Pantoong, on the far side of the Talung valley and the nearest settlement of all to the foot of Kinchenjunga; this village was until a generation ago the home of a group of serpent-eaters. These serpent-eaters all belonged to one *ptso* or patrilineal group, the Salong *ptso*. This *ptso*, though dying out, is not yet extinct, but its living representatives no longer eat snakes. Old Lepchas of Zongu have however seen these people eat the snakes; they would stone the reptile, cut off its head, and devour the body. The origin of this habit is the following story:

'One day the ancestor of the *ptso* was going through the forest when he came on what he thought was a dead bear; but really this bear was an incarnation of Pong *rum*, the king of all animals and the patron God of hunters, who was at the moment taking a rest outside his incarnation's body. The ancestor cut up the animal and ate part of it; whereupon Pong *rum* appeared to him and said "You have eaten part of my body; henceforward you and your children must serve me and worship me and make offerings to me. Henceforward also you and your children may eat all animals, even snakes, with impunity." This is the reason why the people of Pantoong could eat and enjoy snakes, whereas the rest of us would die if we ate them.'

When I was studying the language in Kalimpong, my teacher, a missionised Lepcha, told me that the story of eating snakes was a cruel libel spread about the Lepchas by the Nepali; there was not, he insisted, an atom of truth in it, and he obviously felt that it was deeply insulting and even shameful. For the Lepchas of Zongu however the story was without unpleasant affect; it is frequently repeated as a curious and amusing anecdote, and a certain respect is felt for those people who can boast of actually having seen snakes eaten. It seems improbable that these Lepchas would feel any repulsion to eating serpents if they thought they could do so with impunity; their disgust reactions are very limited; they will eat dead domestic animals and even carrion found in the forest; and they prefer their meat to be as high as possible, provided it is not maggoty. Except during the training of the Mun priests there are no food prohibitions of any sort, except the ban on horse and dog flesh ('He who could eat the flesh of

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considered rather shameless, is not stigmatised as incestuous or even immoral, and there are no sanctions against it. The boy is meant to respect the name of 'mother', but whether he does or not, 'depends entirely on the hearts of the two people concerned.'

A Lepcha is expected to respect his parents and grand-parents, his parents-in-law, and his sons- and daughters-in-law. Of these 'respect-full' situations by far the most important is that between a Lepcha and his parents-in-law. A person is more respectful to his spouse's parents than to his own; he uses more honorific words to them and is careful never to use directly obscene language in front of them. A person must never witness his parents-in-law copulating nor must he be seen doing so by them. Should either of these situations arise the elders will be ashamed and angry.

The tensest of all situations, and one which lasts during the whole life-time of both parties is the relation between a man and his wife's mother, and a woman and her husband's father. These relationships are always rather strained and uncomfortable. If for instance a man's mother-in-law says something immodest, the man himself will feel uncomfortable, and may get up and go away. For a man the situation is most uncomfortable in the period between his betrothal and his bringing his wife home. During that period he has to spend about half his time in his father-in-law's home, helping him in his work; he is almost treated as a servant, under the orders of his father-in-law, and has to be modest and circumspect in his speech and behaviour; the male relations of his wife on the other hand have complete licence to tease him as much as they will and to use every sort of obscene term; if he is provoked into answering back he is humiliated. A woman when she first comes to her husband's house is also delicately situated; but after the actual marriage feast there is no licenced teasing of the bride and, if she is living continually in the same house as her father-in-law, the strain, though it never quite wears off, is considerably lessened. Once he has brought his wife home a man still has to avoid the crudest sexual phrases in front of his parents-in-law; but it is considered a rather amusing and risky game to sail as near the wind as possible.

In theory equal modesty of speech and behaviour should be shown in front of one's own parents and siblings of the opposite sex, but in point of fact in Zongu it is not; one of the things that most shocked our Lepcha servants, who came from the mixed

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593 community of Gangtok, was that parent and child, brother and sister,
184 would joke and act without the least restraint in one another's presence. In fact the Gangtok Lepchas dubbed their brothers of Zongu shameless and uncivilised. Obscene remarks, gestures and actions are never directed towards people nearly related; but the presence of such people is no restraint. Adult brothers and sisters should not, and on the whole do not, touch one another except in cases of actual necessity, such as helping a person at work or if they are ill. This prohibition does not extend to dressing
[302 the hair, which can be performed by anybody for anybody else,
606] with the exception of a son- or daughter-in-law and parent-in-law of the opposite sex.

ii

614 Every Lepcha belongs to a patrilineal clan or *ptso*, which is believed to have originated from some supernatural or legendary ancestor. Nowadays the chief function of the *ptso* is the regulation of marriage and the prevention of incest; it is, to all intents and purposes, an exogamic unit. In theory people of the same *ptso* are allowed to marry if they are separated by nine generations from a common ancestor, and to indicate that a person of the same *ptso* is very far removed a Lepcha will always say 'we can marry'; but in point of fact I did not come upon nor hear of a single instance of two people of the same *ptso* marrying. It was generally stated that though such a marriage was permissive, people would feel shame in it.

It is allowable to marry back into a mother's *ptso* after four generations; but so near a connection is considered somewhat shameless. Datoop's father, the first Dorjé Lapoon, took as his second wife a woman he called 'aunt' (*a-nyou*); his grandmother was a sister of her mother. This marriage was considered quite shameless, and even nearly sixty years later was a subject for embarrassment; but it demanded no sanctions against it, such as would have been invoked if the connection had been on the father's side.

It seems to me possible that in former times the *ptso* represented a geographical unit; in the very small villages there is a tendency for all, or at any rate the majority, of the men to be members of the same *ptso*. But nowadays this has broken down (if indeed it was ever institutionalised) completely; in Lingthem there are male representatives of twelve *ptso*. Of these the most populous

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for women other than their wives produce and have produced many disquieting situations, sometimes leading to open disputes and even suicide.[10] Such disturbances can however be put down to uncontrollable personal temperaments, which go strongly against the Lepcha ideal of behaviour; the regulations of the Lepchas have been devised to reduce to a minimum the conflict and aggression within the group. This has not however been followed by added aggression to people outside the group; William Sumner's generalisation[11] does not hold good here, possibly because through the greater part of their history Lepchas have only had slight and intermittent contact with other groups. Practically all the aggression manifested by the Lepchas is directed against and is supposed to originate from hostile supernaturals. Historically Lepchas have nearly always answered outside aggression by retreating and hiding in the forest; and in the semi-historical stories which they recount about the invading Tibetans or Nepali or Bhutanese, the Lepchas get the better of their enemies, not by violence but by cunning—through cutting off the water supply, shooting fire into the fortress, blocking up mountain paths, and similar devices.

It is worth noting that the Lepchas who live in mixed communities, though they generally know of the theoretical right of access to potential spouses, all deny with great apparent sincerity that these rights are ever taken advantage of; many who have imbued the views of their neighbours the Tibetans or Nepali, regard them with horror. The Lepchas of Zongu themselves are culturally tolerant and know that their neighbours have different rules of conduct; for example the Tibetans forbid the marriage of aunt and nephew, but both they and the Nepali permit the marriage of first cousins which for the Lepchas is the most horrifying form of incest. The habits of other races, particularly the Tibetans, are a fairly constant subject of conversation; many of these habits are viewed with disgust, but disgust tempered by considerable amusement.

In the case of two or more marriages taking place within the same generation of two groups, the levirate and sororate claims are readjusted to meet the situation; for example if two brothers marry two sisters, the younger brother will not have the right of access to or be able to inherit his elder brother's wife, because she

[10] Instances of these disruptive situations are given further on in this chapter and in Chapter Fifteen.

[11] 'The relation of comradeship and peace in the we-group and that of hostility and war towards others-groups are correlative of each other.' W. Sumner: *Folkways* (Boston 1906), p. 12.

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religion, with the rejection of those elements which are alien to the major cultural attitudes, is probable when the converted culture is fully integrated; I think parallels might be found in the conversion to Hinduism of the Nepali, and some of the native Christian and Mahomedan sects in Africa, and, possibly, among the American negroes. When the society is more or less disrupted and the convert feels himself to be alone in an alien world, individual conversion is likely to be much more complete; the Christian Lepchas with whom I came in contact in India and Gangtok had accepted the individualised Christian ethic, with its sense of sin, completely; their whole character-formation and major attitudes appeared to be modified by this conversion; and I very much regret that I was unable to study this character alteration in any detail. I should like to suggest the axiom that *Fully integrated cultures will only accept in an imported complex those elements which are congruent to the existing major attitudes, or which are felt to fill a want; those elements which are violently opposed to existing attitudes will either be excluded or so modified as to bring them into congruence with existing attitudes.* If this axiom is correct it would appear that we can learn from the observation of primitive societies much about the probable results of imposing violent social changes on simple or more complex societies.

iii

The vocation to become a lama is determined by the horoscope which is cast on the third day after birth. All the children of lamas should themselves become lamas, but in practice usually only the eldest son follows the whole career; the younger ones receive sufficient preliminary instruction to enable them to read one or two sacred manuals. The children of laymen are also occasionally predestined to become lamas, usually because they are reincarnations of dead lamas; should a child so predestined not follow his vocation as a lama he will become a half-wit. It occasionally happens that people who are not predestined to become lamas wish to study; they may do so, but 'their destiny will overcome them'.

If it is seen that the infant is going to become a lama he is presented with a yellow sash, and from a very early age his father will bring him to monastery ceremonies to allow him to get accustomed to the special atmosphere. Between the ages of ten and fifteen a teacher is chosen for the child. The choice of a teacher is supposed to be determined by his knowledge exclusively; under

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people of Mayel would fall asleep and would not send the migratory birds. There is a fairly vague tradition that menstruating women should not approach the flowering plants which bear the fruit that the people of Mayel sell—pumpkins, cucumbers, egg-plants and chillies—or the plants will rot.[3] Opinion about this prohibition was very mixed; some people, especially those who have had much contact with other races, think there may be some truth in the matter, while the more conservative, such as the Mandal, think the statement ridiculous.

The preliminary ceremonies, in those houses where they are held, are small repetitions of the big ceremony after the sowing of all the grains which must be held in each house. It is considered desirable that the same people should officiate in each ceremony, and also that the woman who sings in the spring should take the rôle of Talyeu-mu at the harvesting, and, if possible that the sacrificer should take the rôle of Mayel-mu. If the sacrificer is a woman this of course cannot be done.

The spring offerings consist of the *lafêt* sacrifice and *sakyou faat*. The food on the *lafêt* is divided into three lines of three heaps each; the centre line is for the people of Mayel, that on the right for all men's patron gods, and especially those of the house-father, that on the left for all women's patron gods, and especially those of the house-mother. The dried bird's flesh in the *lafêt* must be a special very small bird which has been killed by a virgin boy; if bigger birds are used or if the boy is not a virgin the gods will be displeased and will not eat and there will be a bad harvest. If the sacrificer is a man there is also offered a *taming* which consists of a long stick to which are attached tiny parcels containing every sort of crop and also tiny *patyoot* of *chi*; this is suspended from the roof above the officiant's head. Before the ceremony begins a song is sung in honour of the people of Mayel and then the Mun offers to them *sakyou faat* and powdered portions of the objects on the *lafêt*, calling on the people of Mayel to accept the offerings and throwing them before him or her on to the floor. The cup is constantly re-filled with *chi* with a wooden ladle by a young virgin girl who is sitting beside the Mun. After that everybody except the Mun officiating has to drink some strained *chi* from the buttered cup and eat a part of the offerings and sing songs in honour of the people of Mayel; those people who do not or cannot sing them-

[3] I am told that this is a formal rule among the Nepali, who also consider that these fruit should never be pointed at with the finger.

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witness what I have said. (To Ashyok who had fetched him): If I fail in this I'll never dare look at you again. The Mun then began to pray in a loud and clear voice, and the rest listened quietly and almost reverently—an unparalleled situation in my experience of Lepchas. The Mun first mentioned the Mandal's year of birth and *ptso* and then summoned Sabdok *moong* and Hit *rum* to deliver him, and then called on the gods collectively to give the Mandal a son. 'Why is it,' he asked the gods, 'when he has two wives, and there are lots of other girls going about with gaping vulvas, that he has no son?' (*General laughter*) He then sprinkled the *chi* and said to the supernaturals 'Now I am only doing this small ceremony; when I return to my own home the day after to-morrow I shall repeat the ceremony better.' He then announced in his normal voice that he had done all he could and called on Gongyop to take over from him and finish the ceremony.

This ceremony was, I repeat, the most solemn that I witnessed in Lingthem, and the sexual jokes were therefore comparatively rare; also there were no direct invitations or solicitations, such as would occur in more convivial circumstances.

I found this continual harping on the humorous aspects of sexual physiology puzzling, since most Lepchas have a full and adequate sex life, and face sex extremely simply, without guilt or secrecy; but the town Lepchas found it extremely shocking, for the Lepchas of Zongu would make such remarks before their parents or children; a man would not direct such remarks to his mother-in-law or daughter-in-law, or *vice versa*, but he is not very careful as to whether these people are in ear-shot or not. On the grounds of this openness of speech the town Lepchas called the Lepchas of Zongu uncivilised and shameless. I think it is legitimate to call such remarks obscene, since they are avoided in front of relations-in-law and would cause shame if for example they were uttered by a third person in the presence of a son-in-law and mother-in-law, and since the three operative words are always referred to in circumlocutions before a superior. They are certainly relished as obscenities.

I think one of the reasons for this constant verbal preoccupation with the comic aspects of sex is the fact that at any village gathering or feast the great majority of the people present are, owing to the stringent incest laws, forbidden sexual partners; there is a release from tension in thus jesting about these dangerous subjects, although even in jest direct invitations are not made to people who

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jewels of any women in Lingthem—and also very considerable generosity. She practically supports the children of Pargeut, who is distantly related to her husband (they share a common grandmother) and acts more like their mother than their own mother does. The consequence was that she was the only person who had the confidence of Kondé.[5] When Kondé was having her very painful sores dressed Mrs. Datoop would hold and soothe her with an altogether surprising physical gentleness and tact which was unparalleled among other Lepcha women.

No scandal had ever been attached to Mrs. Datoop's name but she had the reputation of being highly sexed and all her potential *oong-op* have taken full advantage of the relationship.

For four generations Mrs. Datoop's family had the peculiarity of rearing their children in cradles. She was so reared and so were all her children, but Pembu her eldest son has not used one for his own child.

Pembu.

Pembu was born in 1908 and was weaned at the age of two. As a child he was exceptionally frightened and nervous of strangers: indeed he is to this day. As a young child he was very frequently and seriously ill. When he was older up to the age of ten he used to sulk if reprimanded or punished and threaten to kill himself by jumping into the fire or from a high place. The parents would not try to restrain him; they would say 'If such a child wants to kill himself he can.' Sometimes he would run away for the day to an 'uncle's' but he always came back of his own accord of an evening.

At the age of five[6] he was sent to Gangtok as a servant for the Maharajah; the community has to furnish perpetually two boys for this work. In Gangtok he lived with an 'aunt' Kafermu, a woman who had at that time no children. He used to come home yearly for a holiday. The first year he was there he was very miserable but the second time he returned happily enough. Mrs. Datoop said that all the time he was away or when he was ill she was always very anxious and unhappy. When Pembu was about fifteen he quarrelled with his 'uncle' who complained to the Maharajah and Pembu came home for good. Datoop and his wife were glad to have their son back but regretted the cause of his return. On his

[5] See Chapter Twelve, pp. 322–323.

[6] So he says: but as has been pointed out, Lepchas have no number sense, and I think he was probably older.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

224 which is filled with pointed stakes. A bear-hunter must [834] refrain from all sexual intercourse for three months from the day the trap is placed in position, otherwise any bears caught in the pit would escape; but apart from this there is no correlation between hunting and sex, such as is common in many parts of the world. In this particular case the con- [832] nection may possibly be due to the fact that bears' gall- [757] bladders are believed to have some aphrodisiac quality; but they are also said to be useful in curing pains at childbirth, [844] and, mixed with hot water, as an antidote for malaria. They are also much used for curing the peculiar itching of the feet, which is said to be due to walking over excreta in the fields [435] during hot weather. They can be sold in Gangtok for about five rupees each. The flesh, however, is eaten and considered to be rather a delicacy; but for some reason or other most "civilised" people consider it to be unfit for human consumption. I do not know why, for the bear is an exceptionally clean eater and lives mostly on roots and other vegetable matter. I have on occasion tasted the meat myself; it is undoubtedly somewhat full-flavoured and rather tough, and tastes a little like steak that is past its prime; but apart from these minor disadvantages it is perfectly palatable, and no more offensive than beef or pork.

773 One day a man was wandering on the hillsides when he saw what he took to be the dead body of a bear. It was in reality a god; but the actual spirit had for the moment left the bear's body and was standing at a little distance looking on. The man cut up the carcass and ate a portion, when the god itself appeared. "You have eaten my body," it said; "and in return you must worship and serve me henceforth. From this day, however, I give you permission to eat all kinds of animal flesh, even unto the bodies of snakes." This [184] was how the Salong clan of the Lepcha tribe took to eating snakes; but they gave up the habit several generations ago, and it is said that there are now no snake-eaters in Jongu.

224 Once a man takes to hunting he must continue to make

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

844 descend with the afterbirth, thus causing the death of the mother. The following actions during pregnancy are also
[843] likely to have the same effect: eating carrion; eating rice scraped from the very bottom of the pot, and accordingly slightly burnt.

The umbilical cord is generally cut with a small knife by some woman helper; but if necessary the mother may do it herself. The slough of the cord is carefully kept and when it drops off is tied to the child's necklace. It is usually thrown away when the child reaches the age of four or five; but if lost or thrown away before this period it is said that the baby will crawl to the fire-place and scratch amongst the ashes searching for it. The actual cord, together with the afterbirth, is put into a small bamboo container, covered with a cloth, and taken to the forest by the father, where it is hung up on a tree out of reach of insects and animals. Some people say that the container is either buried in the
[753] ground or thrown into a stream; but there seems to be an idea that if the thing is buried by chance in wet ground, for instance, it means that the child will have weak and running eyes in later years; if buried in cultivation it would spoil the crops; and if the afterbirth should, by chance, be eaten by insects or wild animals it might later suffer from skin eruptions. For these reasons the container is usually hung up in a tree; but, as usual, it does not really matter.
● [184] Kalimpong Lepchas think that if the afterbirth is taken too far away from the house there is a danger that a long time will elapse before another child is born; but this idea appears not to be known in Jongu.

845 A stillborn child is taken straight away and thrown into the nearest river. On the way back a Mun will meet the parents some little distance outside their house and will wave such things as thorny plants over them: but there is otherwise no form of ceremony; nor need the pre-natal precautions be continued up to the third day, when it is found that the child is already dead. When a child is stillborn, or dies very shortly after birth, a large stone is heated and the child's

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

of course, in addition to the actual cash contributed by the guests at the *Ong kay* already described.

There is a modified form of betrothal ceremony known as *Ah-kut*, which is done by people who cannot afford the full *Ashyek* payments. It consists in the presentation of one pig's carcass to the bride's parents. No one would willingly be married by means of *Ah-kut*, which may be compared with our marriage by Registrar, if he could possibly afford to carry out the full ceremony, for it is a point of honour with Lepchas to entertain one's friends to the full limit of one's purse; and a failure to do so, should funds be available, would be to stamp oneself as a mean fellow and a bad co-operator. *Ah-kut*, however, constitutes full legal marriage, and no further ceremony is necessary.

Except for the additional wives a man may acquire by inheritance Lepchas do not normally marry a second wife unless the first proves to be childless. The custom of marrying additional wives would appear to be an importation, probably through contact with Nepalis, for the language does not contain any specific word to denote a second wife, the Nepali word *Kanchi* being commonly used for this purpose. I am, of course, aware that it is dangerous to base an hypothesis of this sort on linguistic evidence alone; but it is significant that in other parts of Sikkim and adjacent British India Lepchas are monogamous except for the additional wives some acquire by inheritance.

In Jongu it appears that a childless woman nearly always induces her husband to marry again. If possible he will take one of his first wife's sisters, or possibly a niece; but in any case he should try and obtain some sort of relative of his wife, since this arrangement is thought to cause less domestic friction than might otherwise be the case. It sometimes happens, however, that a man decides to remarry without reference to his first wife (as in the case of Aga, for instance), in which case the new wife must give a present, known as *Thim seut*. It does not take any special form. The new wife should also give something to the eldest child of the first wife.

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

It is very interesting to compare the size of the Jongu families with that of the Christian Lepcha community in the Kalimpong district, details of which I have given in Appendix I. It is true that the latter are strictly monogamous, a fact which tends, at first sight, to support your theory; but I find that the non-Christian Lepchas in the district have equally large families. I should add, however, that there is a marked tendency even among them to drop the old custom of inheriting one's deceased elder brother's wife; and I am told that the sexual rights of brothers are here not regarded.

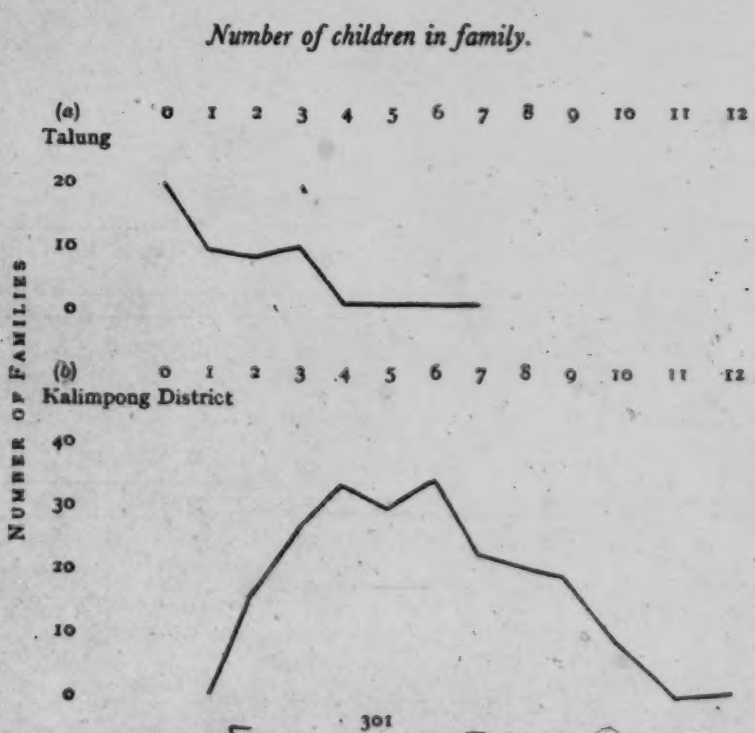
As a result of comparing these figures I have come to the conclusion that the reason why the Lepchas in Jongu are dying out is to a great extent psychological, although I should find it difficult to support this theory with adequate scientific evidence. The Jongu people *know* they are a dying race, and realise perfectly well that they have only been able to retain their separate entity as long as they have by reason of the artificial protection afforded them by making Jongu a Lepcha reserve. Left to themselves they were bound to be submerged; for the admirable customs of co-operation and sharing without regard to individual interests, which are the most pleasing and striking characteristics of their culture, are not yet sufficiently appreciated even in the so-called civilised parts of the world; and when they came into contact with the predatory Nepalese, who have no socialist feelings, something was bound to happen, since the Lepchas had no means of defending themselves; nor is it in their nature to oppose force of any sort. Nor, I think, does their religion give them anything to hold on to, for the Buddhism practised in Jongu has degenerated into little more than an elaboration of the original propitiation of evil spirits to which these people were always enslaved.

I am no advocate of Christian missionaries, for I think that in many parts of the world they have done more harm than good to many primitive communities; and it has always seemed to me a form of arrogance to destroy existing, and in many cases excellent, religions and replace them with

2: Morris T-5 (1937)1938 AK5 Lepcha AK5

APPENDIX I

162 184 THE charts below show the relative sizes of Lepcha families in (*a*) The Talung Valley, and (*b*) the Kalimpong District of British India. The figures for Kalimpong were very kindly supplied by the Rev. W. M. Scott, Church of Scotland Guild Mission. Figures of childless marriages in this district are unfortunately not available; but Mr. Scott informs me that such a state is rare. I have confined the details of the Talung to families which I believe to be completed. This distinction has not been made in the Kalimpong figures; but for comparative purposes it makes little difference.



[p. 302 is blank]

4:Nebesky-Wojkowitz E-5 (1950-1951)1952
AK5 Lepcha AK5

13. About Lepcha funeral ceremonies, especially those performed according to Buddhist rites see Gorer, Himalayan village, pp. 345—362. 600

14. The Chronicles of the Maharajas of Sikkim mention a number of different Lepcha clans. Among these the clans called Sengdungmo, Lingsom-mo, Heemo, Karthakmo and the descendants of the Thekong Salung family were of principal importance; other clans are Tugnyeemo (living near Chumthang), Sampa-puteo-mo (Namtehn and Tsidam), Targokmo (Rin chenpong), Barmekmo (Barmiok), Namteeemo (Namtsi), Mangmungmo (Dentam), Taglongmo (Dallam), Samtrukmo (Samdong), Namphagmo (Namphok) Ratoomo (Rinchenpong), Kabeemo (Tumlong), Phogram-mo and Rungnyogram-mo (Lingthem), Rinyet-rambo (near the source of the Rangeet river), Rathongram-mo (near the source of the Radong river), Ringbit rambho (near the source of the Radong river), Laeogmo (Tashiding and Lasog), Kaleg ram-mo (source of the Kaleg river), Rinagmo (Mangbro), Yogcham-mo (Phensang), Rimpongmo (Rumtek), Nebemo (Dikchu), etc. 618

The Lepcha communities, residing in Ilam (Nepal) were called Rangangmo, Phengbo, Namchamo, Gholingmo, Samdurmo, Kotramo, Sungfungmo, Samlingmo, Lingdam-mo, etc.—The Ilam group of the Lepcha people seems to be of fairly recent origin. According to the historical material available, some 800 Lepcha households, who had taken part in an insurrection against the reigning 7th Maharaja, left Sikkim in 1826 under the leadership of their headmen Dathno, Jerong Denon and the Kazi Gorok, and settled with the assistance of the Nepalese in the province of Ilam.

Two other names should be mentioned here: the *Na ong*, who lived near Dallam in Sikkim, but later died out, and a group of Limbus called Sanyit bho, who were classified as a Lepcha clan. A note on the *Na ong* see also in Kali Kumar Das, The Lepcha People, p. 5.

15. The Ilam Lepchas have a particular custom of keeping those assembled in the house awake during the long vigil.[1] While the *Mun* chants her account, one man—usually somebody who is known as a witty story teller—takes his place in another corner of the house and tries to keep all present awake by telling them jokes and stories. 764 184

16. *The kung tek* and *Ne kung ngal* are said to have been the children of the Lepcha ancestors, *Fa grong thing* and *Na zong nyo*. This first pair of sorcerers is today surrounded by numerous legends, current among the Lepchas. One of these legends tells about their encounter with *Gyad kbum bongs*, the ancestor of the Sikkim Maharajas, who came to obtain their blessing so that sons might be born to him. About the way in which he and his retinue were received by *The kung tek* and his wife, the Chronicles say: "Entering his house they discovered the old man on a raised throne of bamboo. He had washed off the dust and ashes, which had covered his face during his work of clearing the jungle. He had put on his feather cap and the garland of teeth and claws of wild animals, interspersed with various shells and cowries. He sat with a dignified mien, while his wife *Ne kung ngal* was busily engaged in getting food and drink ready. When the strangers entered, a wide bamboo mat was spread on the ground...." *Gyad kbum bongs* received the blessings and returned to his residence in the Chumbi Valley, where in the following years three sons were born to him. Later he went back to Sikkim to offer his thanks to *Thekung tek* and to conclude a pact of friendship with him: "This friendship was cemented by a ceremony, at which several animals, both domestic and wild, were sacrificed and all the local deities invoked to bear witness to this solemn contract of friendship, binding the Lepchas and Tibetans in an inseparable bond. They sat together on the raw hides of animals, entwined the entrails around their bodies, and put their feet together in a vessel filled with blood, thus swearing the blood oath to each other."—This event is also shortly mentioned in Risley, H. H., History of Sikkim, JBTS, Vol. IV., Calcutta 1896.
It is possible, that *The kung tek* was a person which once actually lived and which only later became enveloped in legends, as the Chronicles mention—besides a number of descendants, of whom only the names are given—also a certain Lepcha headman, called Tasa Aphong, who was a direct descendant of *The kung tek* and who served under the second Maharaja, *bsTan barung rnam rgyal* (ascended the throne in 1670). 791

17. While the Lepchas in general derive their origin from Mt. Kanchenjunga and its immediate environs, the various clans later on established legendary relations to various mountains, 773

[1 i.e., during the funeral rites. —Analyst]

7: Hooker D-5 (1849-1851) 1854
AK5 Lepcha AK5

bowstring; and a little pouch, containing aconite poison and a few common implements, is suspended to his girdle. A hat he seldom wears, and when he does, it is often extravagantly broad and flat-brimmed, with a small hemispherical crown. It is made of leaves of *Scitamineæ*, between two thin plates of bamboo-work, clumsy and heavy; this is generally used in the rainy weather, while in the dry a conical one is worn, also of platted slips of bamboo, with broad flakes of talc between the layers, and a peacock's feather at the side. The umbrella consists of a large hood, much like the ancient boat called a coracle, which being placed over the head reaches to the thighs behind. It is made of platted bamboo, enclosing broad leaves of *Phrynium*. A group of Lepchas with these on, running along in the pelting rain, are very droll figures; they look like snails with their shells on their backs. All the Lepchas are fond of ornaments, wearing silver hoops in their ears, necklaces made of cornelian, amber, and turquoise, brought from Tibet, and pearls and corals from the south, with curious silver and golden charm-boxes or amulets attached to their necks or arms. These are of Tibetan workmanship, and often of great value: they contain little idols, charms and written prayers, or the bones, hair, or nail-parings of a Lama: some are of great beauty, and highly ornamented. In these decorations, and in their hair, they take some pride, the ladies frequently dressing the latter for the gentlemen: thus one may often see, the last thing at night, a damsel of discreet port, demurely go behind a young man, unplait his pig-tail, tease the hair, thin it of some of its lively inmates, braid it up for him, and retire. The women always wear two braided pig-tails, and it is by this they are most readily distinguished from their effeminate-looking partners, who wear only one.

11:Hermanns M-5 (1951)1954
AK5 Lepcha AK5

it falls down to the earth once again. This is the line of action from lower to the higher. And so it must be that the land of the gods must be below." In this as in other matters we find that there is a varied line of reasoning among the Lepchas.

(e) The Land of Souls

Some Lepchas believe that the souls of the departed go to the country of the ancestors, Ren djong or Mayal. Others say on the contrary that the soul goes to Rum-lyang. It was there before birth ; thither it returns again after death to be born again as a little child in the land of souls. Immediately after death, the soul goes to an intermediate place Sŏn-lyang, originally called Sŏm-lon, the leader of souls. The Bong-thing summons it back thence and asks it, at the death ceremony how it died, whether it was through illness or through the magic of wicked men. The soul then comes to the ear of the Bong-thing and gives him this important information. He makes the necessary provisions for the individual soul on the basis of this information. The Mun or Bong-thing then leads the soul to the Rum-lyang and locks it up securely so that it cannot return to its pristine home or relations or cause them any manner of harm. The entire ceremony is performed in the Sang-lion rite. A year after death the Bong-thing goes in a trance to Rum-lyang, opens up the place where the soul had been locked. There he finds a little child. He dresses it up in a child's clothes and releases it to live and grow up among the other ancestors.[51]

According to others there is an intermediate place called Tiamtan, or Sari-rung-dong-chen or Siri-nong-dong-chen.[52] Another place is called Nyo-lyang, the abode of the wicked. There are divergent views about the land of souls, just as there are about the land of gods. An old Mun woman of Git-biyong gave us this pertinent item of information, "We bring the souls of the dead very high up in to the heavens and very near the Supreme God, Ta-she-thing. He it is who has created us, the animals and everything else."

51. cfr. G. Gorer, Himalayan Village, London 1938, p. 353 sq.
52. cfr. Stocks, op. cit. p. 337.

23: Benedict
●184, 192, 582, 591, 602, 611, 613, 614, 616, 618, 621

ALl Southeast Asia
Lepcha AK5

/For lists of kinship terms, and for excellent and detailed information concerning correlations between kinship terminology, patterns of behavior, and social institutions, see category 601./